

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2026
Elmwood Community Center

Meeting called to order by Nancy Gierlich, Secretary, at 5:40 p.m.

1. **Roll Call:**

In Attendance: Mike Fournier, Steve Garneau, Nancy Gierlich, Lisa Karam, Cara Paiuk, and Chris Timmel.

Absent: Patrick Cooney, Shawn Daly, Anna Park.

Staff in Attendance: Marc Blanchard.

2. **Adoption of March 30, 2026 Minutes** – passed (Paiuk abstained).

3. **Old Business:**

Capital Improvements Projects Updates

Rockledge Driving Range and Bridge

The range is not yet open, as an epoxy must be applied to the floors to secure the CO.

Eisenhower Pool

Work is behind schedule and the estimated opening date is July 5 instead of June 19.

Miscellaneous Items

Work on the East parking lot at Wolcott to improve accessibility will be substantially complete by June 15.

Memorial Rink

The rink is now expected to reopen just after Labor Day. Summer camp will be held there, but no hockey camps will be held in August.

Summer Camps in 2026

Camps will be held at Beachland and Fern, including tennis, swimming and field hockey.

New Community Center

Planning and budgeting work continues. Karam noted a petition opposing a road at the site is being circulated. Blanchard confirmed plans have not been finalized.

Sustainability Policies Update

The Planting Policy is still under review; Public Works must be able to follow whatever is adopted.

Kennedy Park Planning

A vendor has been selected to do public outreach. A meeting at the park was recently held including representatives from Leisure Services, Public Works, the Tree Action Group, WH Garden Club, police, and a K-5 STEM Curriculum Specialist who often brings Smith School students to the park. The survey should be launched by early June and a special Public Meeting is set for July 27 with the Advisory Board. Stakeholder groups and the public will be invited to attend. Improved parking with handicap spaces and appropriate guardrails would be included.

4. **New Business:**

Proposed Ordinance Updating Rules for Parks and Recreation

A draft ordinance which has been approved by corporate counsel and the Mayor's Office was circulated for discussion. The Board voiced strong concerns with several sections of the proposal. For example, paragraph J now refers solely to "motor vehicle" (and not motorized vehicles such as e-bikes, e-scooters and dirt bikes) and felt no motorized vehicles of any type should be allowed on playgrounds. It was suggested that use "at a walking pace" may be desirable instead of 10 MPH. Similarly, paragraph I should include barring not just arrows but also bullets, rocks, slingshots or similar devices. Regarding paragraph F, Board member Garneau felt alcohol should never be allowed in any of the parks at any time. Currently Feast on the Farm – a major fundraiser for Westmoor Park – allows BYOB with the approval of the Mayor and Town Manager. Blanchard confirmed that is the only event currently given such approval by the Town. Karam noted Bushnell Park on occasion has events where a caterer with a liquor license serves alcohol, but that arrangement has not been adopted by West Hartford. The Board's concerns will be communicated back to corporate counsel and the Mayor's Office.

Veterans Memorial Ice Rink Proposed Fee Increases

The rink manager, Peter Montesano, developed two options for the Board's review. After extended discussion, a motion was made, seconded and approved unanimously to recommend adoption of Proposal 2's first 8 lines (with a discount for 10 packs of passes) and the amounts stated in Proposal 1 for ice rentals (prime and non-prime). It is hoped the new fees will be fully approved by corporate counsel and in place before the rink reopens in September.

AARP Age Friendly Community Survey

This will be available online for a month, and all are encouraged to reply to it.

Summer Programming

Camps will start June 22 and some are already filled. All staff have been hired and training will start in the next few weeks.

Celebrate West Hartford

This will be held June 6 and 7.

5. **Friends of West Hartford Parks Report**

Movies will be held in the parks and a trail walk is planned for the Fall. A clean up at Spicebush Park is being considered as well as possibly co-sponsoring an invasive plant workshop at the wildflower field at Wolcott Park.

6. **Public Comment**—No comments were received.

Meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Next Meeting: Special Meeting on Monday, July 27, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. at Elmwood Community Center.

Minutes submitted by Nancy Gierlich.